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THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

FORMERLY "THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT"
OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE A.A.L.

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VOLUME 48 • • 1955 • • NUMBER 8
AUGUST

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THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

Official Journal of the Association of Assistant Librarians

(Section of the Library Association)

Edited by A. C. Jones, Hornsey Public Libraries.

VOL. 48. No. 8

AUGUST, 1955

EDITORIAL

IT HAS BEEN ARGUED with some force that a library periodical is not the place for literary criticism. That an assistant—at least in a general library—should be knowledgeable about contemporary literature is conceded; that librarians, who presumably read at least the literary newspapers if not the more esoteric journals can usefully add anything to the views of the professional critics has been questioned. But in this as in so many other spheres the need of the librarian as a public servant is different from his need as a reader. His time is limited, and his opinions of much of his stock are necessarily acquired at secondhand. A review of the work of a particular author, or of some small corner of the vast field of literature might well prove useful in stimulating his own reading and critical thought, and in providing, however inadequately, a basis of knowledge about authors and titles as yet unfamiliar.

We hope, therefore, to publish from time to time articles of this nature in the *Assistant Librarian*. Gerald Cotton, joint compiler of the *Fiction Index*, writes in this issue on Thomas Wolfe, and we shall be very glad to receive further contributions from readers. Correspondence arising from the articles will be particularly welcomed.

* * * *

We publish in this issue a letter from the Chairman of the North Western Branch of the Library Association, announcing the inauguration of a Charles Nowell Memorial Fund, to provide an annual award to an outstanding student in the North West. We feel sure that our very many members who have reason to be grateful to Mr. Nowell, however indirectly, for his work on their behalf, will respond generously to Miss Downton's invitation.

Members might like at the same time to be reminded of the loan facilities available to them through that other fund, established by the Library Association as a memorial to the work of Lt.-Col. J. M. Mitchell. Loans of "about £25" are available from the Mitchell Memorial Fund to facilitate attendance at courses in preparation for the Registration Examination at full-time Schools of Librarianship. Full details may be obtained from the L.A. Education Officer.

CHANGE OF HON. EDUCATION SECRETARY

As from June 1st, 1955, Mr. J. S. Davey, F.L.A., has been appointed Hon. Education and Sales Officer of the A.A.L. All enquiries regarding correspondence courses should now be addressed to him at 49, Halstead Gardens, London, N.21.

A.A.L. OFFICIAL NOTICES

OFFICERS OF THE A.A.L., 1955

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Finchley, N.12.

All enquiries about correspondence courses and orders for A.A.L. publications should be addressed to the Hon. Education and Sales Officer.

Subscription orders for the *Assistant Librarian* and enquiries about advertising rates and space should be addressed to the Hon. Treasurer.

Manuscripts and letters for publication, preferably typed and double-spaced, should be sent to the Hon. Editor. No payment is made for articles published in the *Assistant Librarian*.

Distribution of the *Assistant Librarian* is arranged by Divisional Hon. Secretaries in conjunction with the Hon. Membership Secretary. Enquiries about distribution should be addressed to local Divisional Secretaries.

Enquiries relating to membership should be sent to the Hon. Membership Secretary.

All other enquiries to the Hon. Secretary.

A.A.L. CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

Students are reminded that completed application forms, together with the appropriate fees, for the courses beginning in October and November, must reach Mr. J. S. Davey, F.L.A., 49, Halstead Gardens, London, N.21, on or before 30th September, 1955, after which date no application will be considered. Earlier receipt is advisable and would be greatly appreciated. Full particulars of the courses offered are given in the current *Students' Handbook*.

Revision Courses. A limited number of *Registration* and *Final* courses are available to run from September to

December. These short period courses are reserved exclusively for those students who have already sat the examination in the subjects required.

Completed application forms for *Registration* revision courses, together with the appropriate fees, must reach Mr. Davey by 31st August. Application forms for *Final* revision courses will be accepted up to one week after publication of the summer examination results if this is later than 31st August.

Fees. The fee per course is £2 7s. 6d., plus 10s. extra to students in Africa, America, Asia and Australasia.

TALKING ABOUT READING

THOMAS WOLFE

by G. B. COTTON

THOMAS CLAYTON WOLFE was born in Asheville, North Carolina, in 1900, and died after a sudden bout of pneumonia 38 years later in Baltimore. Despite his early death, his literary attainments were such that he has long been a legend in his own country, though he has not until recently become generally known on this side of the Atlantic.

His first novel, *Look homeward angel*, appeared in 1929, and is chronologically first in a series of four books which are his monument. The book is to a very large degree autobiographical, and tells of the growing up of Eugene Gant among his family in Altamont, Old Catawba, which is readily recognisable as Asheville, North Carolina. The members of Eugene's family—the Bible-quoting, drunken and rhetorical father, vast and grandiloquent in all his undertakings and failings, is in reality Wolfe's own father; the mother, folksy and curious in the way of the mountain people of the area, an ex-school teacher, thrifty almost to the degree of miserliness, is Wolfe's own mother. All the children of the family, with the exception of Daisy, who is a completely fictional character, have their counterparts among Wolfe's own brothers and sisters.

The story tells of Eugene's birth, of his gradually developing experiences through childhood, of his education and youth and first love affair, ending with Eugene at the State University, with the death of his revered brother Ben and the impending departure of his father to the sanatorium in Baltimore. The constant background is the fantastic family compounded of the Gants (on the father's side) and the Pentlands (on the mother's side). To a large extent William Gant and Eliza Pentland represent their clans, the one big and full of vision, larger-than-life in everything it attempts; the other prosaic, wary, businesslike, its horizons bounded by the great mountains which bred it. Eugene, as the youngest member of the family, and a sensitive lad, is early torn in his loyalties, admiring the braggadocio of his father (for he, too, is embryonically large and omnivorous in his appetite for life), and feeling real affection for his mother, who suffers through the defections, drunken and sexual, of her husband. And from them both Eugene inherits fine qualities, qualities which mature and guide him as he himself develops in age and experience. A key scene in this novel is that in which Mrs. Gant loses her son Grover—"Twelve years and twenty days old"—in St. Louis during her first and only desertion of her husband. His mother's injunction to Eugene at that time: "Poor child! Poor child! We must try to love one another," remains rooted in Eugene's inner consciousness throughout his life, to provide the sympathy, compassion and understanding which mark the later chapters of his odyssey.

This understanding is a twofold development. On the one hand it embraces a continually developing awareness of the human and social scene; on the other, through a series of significant incidents scattered through the four works which we shall discuss, it reveals itself in a sharpened perception of the worth of individual acquaintanceships. *Look homeward, angel* provides the first of these in Eugene's relationship with Mr. Leonard, whose school he attends for four years before moving on to the university. It does not take long for Eugene to see through the shallow make-up of his mentor, whom he describes as "a

bearer of the torch at noon, an apologist for the toleration of ideas that have been established for fifty years." And so, in his mind, Eugene rejects him, as he is to reject others on successively higher levels during his career.

It is impossible to leave this first novel without reference to Eugene's relationship with his oldest brother Ben. Ben is his idol, the only one of the family group with whom Eugene is completely at ease. His death towards the end of the novel marks Eugene's impending severance of home, but the certitude of this is delayed until the very last scene of the book, when Ben reappears, either in fact or hallucination, in the town square, and Eugene realises that the angel in his father's stonecutter's yard—the angel of the title of the book—is no longer the symbol of his homesickness.

In *Of time and the river* (1935), Eugene leaves his Southern home for graduate work at Harvard, where the scope of his intense romantic appetite for experience is broadened. Here he reads, studies play-writing, and cultivates a wide circle of acquaintances, including Francis Starwick, a cultured, fastidious and affected scholar—the second major personality whom Eugene is later to discard. Eugene achieves a limited success as a dramatist before he leaves for a brief visit home, where his father dies after a long and terrible illness. From now on the mantle of Gant senior, always the dominant personality of the first book, passes on to his son, who in spite of occasional bouts of despair and frustration (possibly in his efforts to assimilate the river-tide of knowledge and experience in too short a time), gradually builds upon the constructive aspect of his father's character and eschews the destructive. He goes north again, this time to serve as a college instructor of English in New York City, and undertakes a European tour, during which he meets Starwick again. The discovery of his friend's homosexual dissipations disgusts him, and he returns to the United States.

The next pair of novels to a considerable degree retrace the same ground as the first, but they are written by a maturing artist. The first of these new novels, *The web and the rock* (1939), has as its central character, George "Monk" Webber. George is, of course, Eugene, or Thomas Wolfe, all over again, in his restlessness, his introspection, his physical appearance. But this time the careful documentation of the Wolfe family is missing. The title indicates symbolically the web of experience, environment and ancestry in which the hero is snared, and his attempt to escape by finding the rock which is the original strength and beauty of vision of his father. Arriving in New York from Old Catawba, George, the young college instructor and writer, enters into a love affair with Esther Jack (to whom we are introduced briefly in the last few pages of *Of time and the river*). *You can't go home again* (1940), deals with George's life after his return to the United States from Continental journeyings; his continuing romance with Esther Jack; his success in writing novels; his relationships with (a) a famous but disillusioned novelist; and (b) his editor Fox (in real life Maxwell E. Perkins, of the editorial staff of Charles Scribner's Sons). In due course these become the third, fourth and fifth of the key characters whom Eugene is to discard—Esther because she is doomed to live for ever by the shallow and effete standards of the literary society of New York; McHarg (the novelist) because in private life he is given to a drunken prostration which is the complete antithesis to the strident, virile note which he strikes in his writings; Fox because he urges Eugene to "swim with the tide," to abandon his newly-found objective social satire and relapse into his old subjective style. The end of this book, which marks

the end of Wolfe's saga, is written on a note of lyrical optimism which succinctly expresses the philosophy of Wolfe, Eugene and George. We have seen his experience broaden from the home environment described in *Look homeward, angel* to the wider world of *Of time and the river*, some reiteration of the first theme in *The web and the rock*, and finally his awakening social conscience in *You can't go home again*, the symbols of his increasing awareness of the intrinsic in society being the five key relationships with Leonard, Starwick, Esther, McHarg and Fox. Now he ends his thesis: "To lose the earth you know, for greater knowing; to lose the life you have, for greater life; to leave the friends you loved, for greater loving; to find a land more kind than home, more large than earth. Wherever the pillars of this earth are founded, toward which the conscience of the world is tending—a wind is rising, and the rivers flow."

Critical opinion on Wolfe is sharply divided. To me he has always appeared to be the modern embodiment of the American dream—the ideal which is never far beneath the surface of the sincere and thoughtful American. And sincere and thoughtful Americans are far more numerous than some of our political newspapers would have us suppose. Something of the classical framework of Homer is in these four books, poured on to paper with the optimism of a Whitman, with literary antecedents in Joyce, Dreiser and Mencken. If the first pair of novels burst upon us with incredible power and imagery, the author's mastery of evocation in the second pair is no less potent, and in addition the descriptions of the shoddy morality of the twenties, the evils of big business, the desperation of the depression and the horror of Nazi Germany reveal an incipient social satirist of remarkable power and compassion. William Faulkner, asked recently by a *Time* correspondent whom he considered to be the foremost twentieth century American novelist, stated that in his opinion the palm must go to Wolfe, because he attempted something which in the range of its conception and the extent of its canvas far transcended the imaginative limits of his contemporaries. Be that as it may, one thing is certain: no study of the twentieth century American novel is complete if its author omits an analysis of the work of Thomas Wolfe, representing as it does a pilgrimage in search of an enduring faith by a man who recognizes that a corrupt society destroys each individual in it, but who nevertheless believes that "the true fulfilment of our spirit, of our people, of our mighty and immortal land is yet to come."

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A.A.L. DANCE.

The Liverpool and District Division is holding a Dance at the Royal Hotel, Southport, on Thursday, 22nd September (during the L.A. Conference Week), 8 p.m. till midnight. Dance tickets may be obtained from the A.A.L. Publications stand at the

Conference or on application to the Hon. Secretary. Price 3s. 6d. Refreshments available. Dress optional.

E. K. WILSON,

Hon. Secretary.

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A VIEW OF THE FINAL EXAMINATION

by LEONARD E. TAYLOR, *Deputy Borough Librarian, Bilston.*

THE PERSISTENT denigration of L.A. examinations denotes a basis of criticism firmer than simple exam-examinee friction. It emphasises in particular that the Final examination neither produces librarians nor provides an accurate assessment of abilities: it produces only examinees, successful or otherwise. Those people remarkable by passing several parts of Final in few months, by private study, serve usefully to underline the fact that this examination can usually be passed on a minimum of knowledge.

Administration, with Cataloguing and Classification, involves two correspondence courses concurrently, twenty lessons in about thirteen months, made necessary by the imposition of an artificial barrier to taking parts separately. Yet why should this be so? Is there any valid reason other than the possible mistake of having an autonomous Examinations Committee? Surely examiners and promoters of our status would welcome the idea of a complete course for each individual part, bringing with it better opportunities to study adequately and examine thoroughly. One cannot take seriously the suggestion that, if exams were made more easily accessible, then grants to attend library schools would become scarce, leading perhaps to disaster for the schools. Grant committees are sane, despite student opinion, and realise that school tuition is without match.

One cannot hope to persuade examinees to more than is strictly necessary preparation, but what is strictly necessary is open to debate. If this basis of the strictly necessary be accepted as synonymous with that which can be purposively used—a fundamental prerequisite of any rational examination policy—then the Fellowship is open to common sense improvement. Compare the number of candidates for Historical Bibliography with that for Advanced Cataloguing and Classification. The reason for the popularity of the former needs little seeking—one course, the bare minimum again. But the practical usefulness of Cat and Class over Bibliography, for the everyday work of the vast majority of librarians, is very obvious.

In such text books and journals as we suffer, much emphasis is placed upon the need to be abreast of current developments in all fields. The spearhead of our attack on this problem is formed by the specialist librarians, wherever they be employed (and there are many in public libraries). Far from realising this we seem, as a body, to ignore the plea for recognition of these increasingly important members, not least in syllabi and examinations. Could we not learn something of value from the policy underlying the General Certificate of Education arrangements? Is there something wrong or evil in the idea of gaining a Fellowship on the basis of, say, two papers at advanced level (over present standards) and two or three at an ordinary (present) level? By the time a competent librarian of experience comes to tackle Fellowship it is not too much to expect that he has a reasonable idea of his future interests, and he should be able to gain an examination qualification based upon those interests and placing them at a high standard, with a general background of knowledge ensured by ordinary level passes. We might then be able to say that a Fellow, having gained advanced level passes in the subjects of his choice, really knew what he was talking about, and had not merely passed on a minimum qualification throughout his examinations.

An interesting sidelight appears on page 92 of *The Assistant* for May, 1955.

RETURN MATCH

READERS OF THE *December Assistant* will have noted how, last year, Sheffield's staff association lured the unsuspecting representatives of G.L.D. northwards under pretext of showing them Manor Branch Library; and thrashed them at cricket. Well, of course, Eric Moon wasn't going to let us get away with it as easily as that. "You come to London next year," he said. "We haven't any libraries worth seeing, but we'll find a cricket ground . . . and the beer's not bad . . ."

Undeterred by the prospect of meeting the full strength of G.L.D. on its own ground, we set sail southward on the first fine Saturday for weeks. Lack of London weighting denies us the luxury of private cars, and we travelled in a communal 29-seater. The journey down was uneventful; a veritable doldrum before the ensuing storm.

Half-an-hour before schedule, Marylebone Town Hall loomed on London's limited horizon, and one member of the reception committee was already present. Thence away, some to be wined, some dined; others to imbibe the culture of the metropolis—or even to discuss librarianship. Rumour has it that the largest party left a certain hostelry sooner than had been their original intention. This, for the sake of propriety, if not of accuracy, must be denied.

Now, for some reason not at first comprehended by us stolid northerners, our captain, secretary and scorer had been billeted together. Let their host remain anonymous—we shall call him "Smith." But as meal followed meal with startling rapidity, the plot unfolded. By Sunday mid-day, Sheffield's three most important men lay fuddled and helpless, unable to move, or even think clearly. To cut a longish story shorter, they were late. The skipper lost his opportunity to use his double-headed penny; Ron Surridge for G.L.D., used his double-tailed two-bob piece instead and decided to bat. Moreover, the score was already into double figures when the three arrived, and our scorer was too late to argue about it.

On what was described at the time as "a Yorkshire pudding of a wicket," Sheffield bowled well (by their standards), but not well enough, and their fielding was non-existent. London amassed 107 runs and then completed our discomfort by stuffing us with more food. From then on it was a case of how few runs Sheffield could get. Batsman No. 1 misjudged the length of Eric Moon's arm and was accordingly run out; No. 2 holed out in one; No. 3 thought a straight ball was on the leg side. And so on. Appropriately enough, Charlie Taylor—who started all this business—got most of our meagre total of 46 all out. Our demoralisation was complete. Southern subtlety had triumphed over northern tenacity. Revenge was sweet.

Thence homeward, after doing a Cook's tour to deposit members of the "G.L.D." team in various villages in Hertford, Hereford, Cheshire, etc. The return journey was a little livelier than that of the previous day, but everybody remained cold sober, which just goes to show how philosophically we Yorkshiremen take defeat—even at cricket.

DEAN HARRISON, *Sheffield P.L.*

CORRESPONDENCE

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

I have never been more distressed in my life, nor more angry, than when I read the Presidential Address in the June number of the *Assistant Librarian*, and found myself so shamefully misquoted therein. The G.L.D. Annual General Meeting in question was the first occasion upon which I have ever had the temerity to speak; it will certainly be my last, as I do not now ever intend to run the risk of being misunderstood again. May I please try to vindicate my name and endeavour to straighten out my words which have been so cruelly twisted?

So far as I can remember, at this particular meeting certain speakers had said in no uncertain terms that special librarians should be booted out of the Library Association and be made to join ASLIB. I remember feeling so incensed about this that I found myself standing on my feet and replying that this was most unfair to the assistant in the special library and that if I and my colleagues were sufficiently interested in the library world to want to become chartered librarians, why should membership of the L.A. be denied to us merely because we happened to work in a special and not a public library. Any undue stress on examinations was no doubt due to the fact that the unpleasant things loom large in the life of any student—it was certainly not from any joy experienced in sitting them! How could there be any point in becoming a chartered librarian and not being a member of the L.A., it would seem an absurd state of affairs, and I can think of no professional body, which is also an examining body, where such a strange arrangement exists.

Lastly, I should like to protest strongly against the quite erroneous views ascribed to me about library co-operation, all the more astonishing as it has always been something of a

hobby-horse of mine that there should be the closest liaison between all kinds of libraries, for the good of all. In the course of my duties at the War Office Library, many enquiries from public libraries come my way, and this is an aspect of my work which I particularly enjoy. I also enjoy the activities of the Reference and Special Libraries Section for the same reason.

As I have questioned several of my colleagues who were present at the meeting, to whom my meaning seems to have been perfectly clear, I am at a loss to understand how my few poor words can have suffered such maltreatment. Can it be that Mr. Bristow indulged in a little wishful thinking in order to ride his own hobby-horse with the greater bravado?

DAPHNE M. JEPSON,

Assistant, War Office Library.

[Reference to p. 104 of our June issue will show that Miss Jepson is mistaken in thinking that any views about library co-operation were ascribed to her by the President.—Hon. Ed.].

There is supposed to be no smoke without fire, and until I read the current issue of the assistant, I thought of that as one of those broad statements roughly true. I hope assistants will not be misled into seeing fire where there is none.

Mr. Bristow's statement, italicized and exclamation-marked, "*Your Association is in danger!*" is one of the silliest parts of an address not notable otherwise for its wisdom or its statesmanship. I have been a member of the Library Association Council for ten years, A.A.L. representative on the Council for six years before that, and a member of the Executive for seven years, and I never remember during the whole of that time any serious suggestion being made of the demise, either by murder or suicide, of the A.A.L. I challenge Mr. Bristow or anyone

else to produce any document, minute, or report to the L.A. Council which does make any such suggestion. I played a small part in the defeat of the L.A. proposals in 1938, and my own impression is that both sides in that dispute realized that we have more to do as a profession than waste our time in internecine quarrels.

Mr. Hutchings made a speech. Mr. Hutchings is Treasurer of the L.A. But Mr. Hutchings is an individual also, and so far his views are his own. He has not placed these views before the L.A. for discussion.

Nor has Mr. Bristow yet placed his own views before the A.A.L. (or so I suppose), and no one is going around saying the A.A.L. intends to set up as a separate association. Before he does put those views, he might take pause to think that if the L.A. owes a lot to the A.A.L., the reverse is also true. Just one example only. What other Association of this size has its membership fee collected for it and remitted in the form of a single cheque? Any Treasurer of a small association will realize what a difference that makes in labour and stability. Could the A.A.L. run itself so cheaply if it hadn't that advantage? Would its membership be so large if membership didn't just mean a tick on a piece of paper?

Fortunately, such considerations are not yet practical ones. I hope they never will be, for there never was a time when unity of the Library profession was so important. If we can speak with one voice, a bigger voice; if we can pool all our separate talents, then we can achieve better personal status, better professional status, and better libraries, which is what we are here for. The A.A.L.—L.A. relationship, untidy though it is, is a workable partnership to the advantage of both, and may it long continue.

The Editor of the *London Librarian* this morning displays a common sense that is heartening. I should like to see his leading article given wider circulation, since his views are those I think of most of us.

F. M. GARDNER,
Borough Librarian, Luton.

THE FUTURE OF THE A.A.L.

Let us agree to face one unpleasant fact—the Library Association is of *no importance whatsoever*. It carries no weight with our employers, and has almost lost the confidence and loyalty of its younger members because of its unwillingness to soil its delicate fingers with sordid trivialities like salaries and conditions of service—the apparent attitude of chief librarians has already been pointed out by another correspondent. To leave all negotiations with our employers in the hands of NALGO is an intolerable dereliction of duty and tantamount to professional suicide. We do not recruit for our profession from among the same type of person as other branches of local administration—indeed, our chief competitor is probably teaching, a profession which offers higher pay, longer holidays, a higher social standing and a professional association which is constantly striving to better the lot of its members. In addition, we cannot help but feel that we are too small a minority to make our special needs known through as large and all-embracing an organisation as NALGO; consequently, there is a generally cynical attitude towards the Library Association, which seems to do nothing for our material well-being, and apathy towards NALGO in which we feel we are bound to be swamped by other groups of local government officers.

The future existence of the A.A.L. may depend largely on whether it is prepared to take a more positive attitude than its parent body and press for our recognition as an independent profession in all negotiations with employers, or whether it intends joining the Library Association in its ivory tower. We assistants need some organisation like that formed by our chiefs to protect their interests; we need a resolute, vigorous and vigilant professional association which will not think the material needs of its members beneath its dignity to consider—the A.A.L. could be the nucleus of that association, and, if needs be, independent of the Library Association. The

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Telephone: Clerkenwell 3250.

Library Association could then become in theory what it is already in practice to most of us—just an examining body, which might then largely support itself by charging higher examination fees so that we are no longer forced to pay much-begrudged subscriptions to an association which has shut its eyes to reality and ignores the most urgent problems of the majority of its members.

L. E. MILTON,
Assistant, Kent Co.L.

[Intending correspondents on this theme would be well advised to refer again to the letters of Messrs. E. W. Moxey and G. E. Haslam (*Assistant Librarian*, Feb., 1953) to avoid going once more over familiar ground.—Hon. Ed.].

DISPLAY AND DISPLAYS.

I smouldered when the A.A.L. decision to publish an annotated catalogue with a chapter on display work instead of a Display Manual was announced to G.L.D. Committee. I absolutely burn with protest at Mr. Francis's letter in the June *Assistant*.

Taking Mr. Francis's letter first, I suggest he learns the difference between display and displays. Classification of books is one orderly method of display. I suggest the public have sampled this method long enough to get lost in the maze. It is now time for us to help them out. Economists have for a long time known about particular vantage points which will draw attention to themselves because of their situation. These I believe are commonly called "hot spots," and they are fully recognized by the managers of the self-service grocery stores. It is time for libraries to wake up and use such facilities for helping the public to help themselves. Mr. Francis talks about a Reader's Librarian; but to what percentage of the borrowers can he be an adviser? The majority come in to help themselves. We have not the time or the staff to help every borrower, so we limit personal service to those who know what they want (be it a subject, title, author, or only a

vague idea). Those who only want "a book" usual get no personal service. Display and displays can help us to help the public. Can we afford to do without them?

I am still very disappointed that the Display Manual envisaged at Birmingham will in fact be little more than a glorified catalogue. The Americans are so good at manuals. I had hoped we would be able to produce something worthy of G.O. Ward's *Publicity for Public Libraries*. I shall of course look forward to the catalogue. Perhaps the unanswered questions will be enough to fill a manual.

MARION WILDEN-HART,
*Branch Librarian, Pinner Branch,
Middlesex Co. L.*

[Miss Wilden-Hart smoulders unnecessarily. As reported in our May issue, the suggestion of a "Primer of Display Work and Publicity" was not enthusiastically supported at Birmingham. It was in fact narrowly rejected at the final general session, but on the President's ruling it was nevertheless referred for further consideration to the Press and Publications Committee. The Committee's view seems to have been much the same as that of the Conference.—Hon. Ed.].

CHARLES NOWELL MEMORIAL FUND.

The Council of the North-Western Branch of the Library Association feel that some lasting tribute should be paid to the memory of the late Charles Nowell.

Many projects have been discussed, and our final decision, which is to inaugurate an annual award to an outstanding student in the North-West has been influenced by Mr. Nowell's great and lasting interest in professional education.

Whilst this memorial is, in the first instance, a North-West project, it has been felt that Mr. Nowell's many friends throughout the profession might wish to pay their tribute to his memory by being associated with it, and I am, therefore, appealing to all who are sympathetic towards this

suggestion to send a contribution to Mr. Alan Longworth, F.L.A., Hon. Treasurer, North-Western Branch of the Library Association, The Public Library, Peel Park, Salford.

JANE A. DOWNTON,
President, North-Western Branch,
Library Association.

PERIODICALS FOR DISPOSAL.

I have for disposal as gifts the following unbound periodicals:—

Library Assistant, 1928-40, 1947-50.

Library Association Record, 1932-40, 1945-50.

A.A.L. Greater London Division
News, 1952-54.

Unesco Bulletin, 1947-50.

British Book News, 1946, 1947 and 1948.

If any Library or Library School is in need of individual numbers of these periodicals to make up sets and would care to let me have a note, I will do my best to supply them. Should more than one request be received for the same number, I will endeavour to make an equitable distribution; but to enable me to reply to enquirers, may I ask that a stamped and addressed envelope be sent with requests?

A. R. HEWITT,

Secretary Librarian, Univ. of London
Institute of Commonwealth Studies,
27, Russell Square, London, W.C.1.

[An almost complete run of the N.B.L. journal, *Books*, 1945-1954, is also available on application to the Hon. Editor].

JUNIOR ASSISTANTS?

The art of controversy has many facets; one of them, despised by those who have confidence in their point of view, is cheap personal abuse irrelevant to the subject. I do not propose to join Mr. Moon on the ground he has chosen: I can only wonder that he has time to waste inventing these comic allegations. Your readers will, of course, have observed that Mr. Moon does not attempt to bring any evidence against either of my criticisms; and if they care to look at the references attached to the paper beginning on

page 69 of the L.A. Conference Proceedings, 1954, they will find an example of what I deprecate as bad professional practice.

D. J. FOSKETT,
Information Officer, the Metal Box
Co., Ltd.

[This correspondence is now closed.
—Hon. Ed.].

PRIMER OF WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE.

May I reply to Miss C. D. Stewart's challenge to English children's librarians? I am glad that there are fifty librarians in Toronto alone who could undertake the work. Fifty children's libraries in England would cover a most extensive area!

There are a number of excellent and experienced children's librarians who I am sure would be well satisfied to have the leisure to sit down and write such a primer. The operative word is "leisure"—something the children's librarian rarely has within or without working hours. There is usually only one fully qualified librarian per borough, whatever its size (that is, where they are enlightened enough to appoint one). When she is not administering the junior library or libraries she is occupied in giving talks to local bodies or schools, doing extension work, organizing special activities, giving lectures, preparing booklists, and keeping well up-to-date with all new books, the latter job frequently done in "leisure time." We have in this country neither the amount of children's librarians (barely 250 in the British Isles) nor the time to work on such a primer. Work with young people is still a young plant here, and until people have different ideas as to the value of the children's librarian to the library users of the future and the community as a whole, the young plant will be slow to achieve maturity.

LEONIE E. TATTERSALL,
Children's Librarian, Coventry P.L.
[Nevertheless it is pleasant to be able to report two offers to undertake such a task as a result of the invitation in our June issue.—H.C. Ed.].

REFORMER'S NIGHTMARE

H. A. WHATLEY,

Assistant Lecturer, Glasgow School of Librarianship.

IT HAPPENED the night after we had been arguing about the nationalisation of libraries. The local branch had put on a debate and the speeches had poured out so fast and furiously for a time that one nearly lost track of one's own views. (I take it that a librarian attends a professional meeting in order to hear people say things which support his own beliefs. If no one does, then, of course, he rises and says them to convince himself).

Not having had enough, Jake, Muriel and I continued to chunter all the way across town, and I can only presume that a rather larger measure of cheese than I can assimilate comfortably must have given rise to the following nightmare. (Looked at for the recipe, you will find the best bits of Adams, Kenyon, McColvin, Joeckel, Winslow, Vollans, Ranganathan, Filon, and Ashby, put into a hot oven and baked until more than duff brown).

Whether for or against state control, we found the universal obstacle was lack of money. "Easy," said Muriel, "get state aid and your funds will be nearly doubled" (Jensen, Halmstad, and Gardner). "Not it," I said; "have to get a Government department first. Compare the growth of education between 1832 and now. Nothing then, millions to-day. Pity we missed the 'bus in 1850, 1919 and ever since."

The scene faded and my friends with it. Next I seemed to be in some library utopia. Whether it was 1985, I could not tell. The Ministry of Information and Libraries (MIL) had been established by Act of Parliament as a direct result of the valuable services rendered to industry by information and documentation centres and special libraries. Over a hundred years of public libraries counted for naught, it seemed. Remember how the 1919 P.L. Act was promoted by an outside body? However, public libraries benefited enormously from MIL, as we shall see. A handful of the largest public libraries had gone on from the commercial and technical libraries of World War I to much greater development following World Wars II and III, and had won recognition and the support of the business world.

MIL meant the co-ordination of all library services. Libraries of all kinds were regrouped independently of local government boundaries on a more practical basis to serve industry first from nodal points of business concentration. Libraries were no longer attached to education; the old apronstrings had been cut for ever. State grants were provided according to sums raised locally (following Scandinavian practice). And because industry itself helped so much to swell the local total, finances soared. At once Britain leapt into the front as having the most efficiently run library service in the world. County and urban services ceased to duplicate effort uneconomically; they were amalgamated; subject specialisation was applied easily on a regional basis; RLB had funds and staff not only to bring union catalogues up to date, but also to become bibliographical centres in the full meaning of the words. Special libraries had doubled and trebled in numbers and were making great use of the regional reference libraries (RRL) housed in the great public libraries of the country. Some of these were also the bibliographical centres. Thus these libraries became hives of industry of another kind; new departments

and extensions had to be built to cater for the volume of work that was now the daily norm. Telephones hummed with enquiries, teletypewriters and facsimile transmission were commonplace, photoduplication, translation, abstracting and indexing services formed a large part of the work performed.

While obviously industry and the country gained most from these developments, the general public enjoyed a far better library service than they do at present. The additional funds permitted expansion to cover all media of communication. Many new buildings were erected replacing obsolete mausolea. New plans included rooms for radio, television, film, music, discussion, and for young people to do their homework. In other cases, redundant cinemas were adapted, but mainly as deposit centres for the storage of the lesser-used materials. That ancient barrier, the counter, was removed entirely from the lending library and placed in the entrance hall (Frederiksberg Plan and San Diego). The public had grown accustomed to the two grades of library worker—the counter clerks and the readers' advisers. The adviser, by his knowledge, skill and resourcefulness, had won readers' approval and was now thought of as "my librarian" just as one speaks of "my doctor" or "my lawyer." Materials of all kinds, book and non-book, a clipping, a pamphlet, a report, a periodical, a photocopy, were readily available for home use. Other material was easily obtained through the RRL and mailed to readers or delivered personally the same day as received.

Staff had been increased sufficiently to solve those old-time disservices of impoliteness and delay. How had the extra staff been obtained, did you say? In one direction salaries had been improved because of the breakaway from local government standards and raised to levels similar to those of the teaching profession. This did not touch the counter clerks and unskilled workers. In this direction there was a silent revolution. Strangely enough, whereas in the fifties young people sought jobs with good, that is, convenient-to-them, working hours and amenities such as canteens and music, the ever-increasing difficulties of bus queues, cinema queues, waiting for a hair-do, higher charges at popular holiday periods, had caused a reversion, and enough of these young people saw the hidden assets of a librarian's life to aspire to it. The five-day week became $4\frac{1}{2}$ days; split duties on two days (with travelling allowance for the second time of travel in one day) made all sorts of things so much easier that they could be done comfortably and even in leisure.

Information—and recreational reading—meant increased productivity in all walks of life. Were libraries tied to the dictates of the state? Not really, when people saw and admired the results. Some of the staff were former processors, classifiers, and cataloguers. Through the National Library Centre the majority of books were ordered and received fully prepared for the shelves with the catalogue entries supplied. BNB was there, but not as a substitute for a catalogue. The dictionary catalogue had gone to join the indicator in the library schools' museum of library archives, though it was still used for small collections of books.

What else? We found such details as the Browne system of charging universal in Britain because none of the experiments made by librarians in this country and abroad had produced a better or faster method. With uniform stationery in use and issues sorted by classification and coloured cards, an assistant could work anywhere at a moment's notice. Moreover, the additional counter staff meant that queues were rare.

There was a new zest among librarians themselves. Firstly because

all types of library worker came together for training at one of the country's four library schools. A two-year course gave most of the time to acquiring a knowledge of the media of communication, what they are and how to use them—a modernised bibliography and assistance to readers' course—with English literature modified in the first year to a place alongside the literatures of other special subjects. Cataloguing and classification were mainly historical subjects treated in outline only plus a more detailed working knowledge of the national scheme in use. At the end of the first year, students went out for three months' study tour, at home and abroad, collecting impressions and testing their views. The second year was devoted to specialisation in a subject field of knowledge of interest to the student, plus the newer subjects of public relations, psychology, salesmanship and public speaking. For the minority who decided administration was more interesting than working with books and readers, the second year would be spent on practical problems, case studies, committee meetings and the like, and the newer subjects mentioned above.

Taken all round it sounds as though librarians are having a cushy time . . . on a bed of roses . . . bed . . . sounds . . . eh? oh! There was my electronic tea-maker at work . . . the gurgle of boiling water pouring on to the tea-leaves pulled me out of my nightmare.

As I sipped my Lap Sang Shu I recalled what I could. Impossible? Far-fetched? I didn't see why it need be, and I leaped out of bed eager to do all I could to help industry to realise that the library could help industry to realise new heights of productivity and would in its turn help the library to reali . . . *ad infinitum*.

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writes Mr. Geoffrey Whatmore, Librarian of the Manchester Guardian, in his article on Sources of Contemporary Biography in the Spring 1955 issue of the "Library Review".

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